



Peacebuilding Fund

2010 ANNUAL PROGRAMME¹ NARRATIVE REPORT

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Country and Thematic Area²

Sierra Leone, Democracy and Good Governance

Programme No: JVP 15

MDTF Office Atlas No: 00071608

Programme Title: Development of an Independent National Public Broadcasting Service for Sierra Leone

Participating Organization(s):

UNDP, UNIPSIL

Implementing Partners:

- Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation, Ministry of Information and Communication
- BBC World Service Trust, Deutsche Welle Akademie, Hirondelle Foundation, Journalists for Human Rights, Knight Foundation

Budget (from the Fund):

UNDP: 850,000 USD

Programme Duration (in months):

Start date³: 01/01/2010

End date: 31/12/2010

¹ The term “programme” is used for programmes, joint programmes and projects.

² E.g. Priority Area for the Peacebuilding Fund; Thematic Window for the Millennium Development Goals Fund (MDG-F); etc.

³ The start date is the date of the first transfer of funds from the MDTF Office as Administrative Agent.

I. Purpose

The objective of the project is to assist the SLBC to firmly establish itself as a public service broadcaster in Sierra Leone that will contribute to peace building, democracy, human rights, reconciliation, development, and empowerment of the people. Information is power, and unbiased, balanced, and independent information from all sectors of society, from all ethnic groups and all political parties must be provided to all the people. The power of the media to enable the citizens to participate in national and regional debates is also of critical importance to “owning” democracy. The following are the expected project outputs:

1. A law reflecting international standards of public service broadcasting and that promotes principles of independent and responsible journalism in support of the development and promotion of democracy and social and economic development is passed by Parliament.
2. A Board of directors is established, trained and operates in an independent and responsible manner.
3. The programming of SLBC is unbiased, neutral, balanced, and covers the breadth of Sierra Leone society.
4. A national coverage plan is created and near national radio coverage provides the people of Sierra Leone with access to SLBC programming.
5. SLBC has the resources it needs to provide regular and reliable programming: buildings, equipment, staff, skills, and funding.
6. The staff of SLBS is provided with a severance package that includes cash payment and training opportunities.
7. The public are informed about the nature of the new public broadcast service and its advantages, and about the closure of SLBS and UN Radio.

The project is related to the Democracy and Good Governance area of the PBF Priority Plan. There is a significant role for a national broadcaster to fill. The Government of Sierra Leone has recognized and embraced the concept that an independent broadcast service better serves the objectives of peacebuilding, good governance and progress than one which is controlled by partisan groups. Against this backdrop, SLBC was created by law in January 2010, replacing the SLBS and UN Radio, as the second independent public broadcaster in Africa. This is therefore a unique and unprecedented opportunity to consolidate a process that began with the establishment of UN Radio. Finally, the project offers the opportunity to empower an information hungry public by supporting the capacity building of and increasing public access to SLBC, a broadcast institution which is truly independent and owned by the public through public funds.

II. Resources

Financial Resources:

In 2010, the project also received funding from UN DaO in the amount of 792,000 USD.

Human Resources:

International Staff:

- 1 Institutional Development Consultant
- 1 Technical\Engineering Consultant

III. Implementation and Monitoring Arrangements

The project is directly implemented by UNDP Sierra Leone in consultation with the SLBC and other project partners. UNIPSIL provides technical assistance and guidance to the SLBC on specific issues relating to the operations of an independent national broadcaster through the Media Management Advisor. UNDP is primarily responsible for procurement and fiduciary oversight and accountability. As a Direct Implementation Modality (DIM) project, all procurement of goods and services is conducted by UNDP in accordance with its policies and procedures. The project supports the institutional development of SLBC in key areas such as finance, human resources and procurement. As SLBC builds capacity and a track record in project management over the course of 2011, a capacity assessment will be conducted at the end of the year to determine the fund disbursement modality for 2012. An increased project and fund management capacity of SLBC will lead to quarterly advances of project funds to be managed directly by SLBC.

UNDP's Programme Officer and UNIPSIL's Media Management Advisor meets with SLBC on a weekly basis to coordinate and support the management of project activities. The SLBC is responsible for producing quarterly progress reports for the project.

IV. Results

With regard to overall results, the project made progress towards project outputs and achievements as follows:

Output 1: A law reflecting international standards of public service broadcasting and that promotes principles of independent and responsible journalism in support of the development and promotion of democracy and social and economic development is passed by Parliament.

SLBC was created by law in January 2010, replacing SLBS and UN Radio, as the second independent public broadcaster in Africa. SLBC was officially launched on May 15th 2010 in the presence of the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, and the President of Sierra Leone, Ernest Bai Koroma. The Secretary General acknowledged the contribution that the UN Radio has made since 2000 to the peace building process in Sierra Leone as the only radio station that reached the length and breadth of Sierra Leone and provided independent, neutral and unbiased source of information. The President emphasized that the SLBC is people's radio station and provides a means through which all Sierra Leoneans can participate in the national dialogue and development process. The President also stressed that SLBC is not a Government broadcaster and will have no place for political influence. He encouraged the SLBC Board Chairperson to provide the necessary policy guidance to ensure the independence and neutrality of the institution.

Output 2: A Board of directors is established, trained and operates in an independent and responsible manner.

Following the appointment of the Chairperson of the SLBC, the Board of Trustees became operational in mid-June 2010 with the appointment of 6 out of 8 board members. Training was conducted in February 2010 to the Members to be on the roles and responsibilities of running a national independent public broadcaster. The DG and DDG were also appointed in 2010 and took up their posts on 1 October 2010. The interviews took place in early August 2010 with the participation of representatives from the UN as observers. The Director

General was appointed by the President on the recommendation by the SLBC Board of Trustees, and was also approved by the Parliament. The Deputy Director General was appointed by the Board. The recruitment of DG and DDG is a tremendous step forward in the institutional development of the newly established public broadcaster as the DG will lead the rest of the recruitment process.

Output 3: The programming of SLBC is unbiased, neutral, balanced, and covers the breadth of Sierra Leone society.

On April 1 2010, broadcasts of SLBC started combining existing programming from SLBS and UN Radio into a single programme aired on UN Radio and SLBS frequencies. While the full transition from SLBS, a government-run broadcaster, into the SLBC, an independent public broadcasting corporation, may not be achieved instantly, this is a tremendous step forward in the establishment of a broadcaster that delivers inclusive, balanced and diverse programming that will continue to be a vital source of information for the Sierra Leonean public.

Output 4: A national coverage plan is created and near national radio coverage provides the people of Sierra Leone with access to SLBC programming.

The Technical Consultant conducted a field visit to 8 SLBC locations nationwide (Kabala, Makeni, Magburaka, Kono, Bo, Pujehun, Kenema, Kailahun) to survey the condition of the SLBC regional stations and former UN radio transmitters. Based on the visit, a report was prepared with recommendations for national distribution, a national coverage plan and highlighting equipment and infrastructural needs at the SLBC facilities in Freetown and across the 8 district locations. List of desired procurement items were also developed which will inform procurement needs and priorities for the project.

Output 5: SLBC has the resources it needs to provide regular and reliable programming: buildings, equipment, staff, skills, and funding.

Following the completion of the renovation of the first floor of the SLBC building, assets of former UN Radio were transferred to the SLBC building and Leicester Peak to the transmitter site. These assets included studio equipments, computers and other IT equipments, furniture, and air conditioners, and will assist the smooth operations of the independent broadcaster. Renovation of the first floor of SLBC was completed on time by 15 May allowing the official launch to take place as scheduled. The refurbishment included a complete renovation of the layout of the first floor which now has 3 studios for radio broadcast, a board room, a production room, several offices and toilets. Cabling and networking work for internet connection was completed and office furniture was also delivered on time.

Output 6: The staff of SLBS is provided with a severance package that includes cash payment and training opportunities.

The severance packages have been paid to outgoing SLBS staff whose last day of employment was 31 March 2010. After being developed by the SLBS management and the Ministry of Labour, they were reviewed and modified by the Auditor General's Office for final payment. The payment came from the PBF to the Ministry of Information and Communication who was responsible for distributing the severance packages to 160 outgoing SLBS staff, after a final amount was agreed upon.

Output 7: The public are informed about the nature of the new public broadcast service and its advantages, and about the closure of SLBS and UN Radio.

Messaging for the various public information campaigns informing the public on the new SLBC was developed and started to be broadcasted on 1 April. The campaigns contained live interviews on SLBS radio and television, two programmes on UN Radio, and a press briefing by the Ministry of Information and Communication. The TMT and SLBC collaborated with the IMC, with its mandate to promote a free and pluralistic media, to carry out a public information campaign. Therefore in April, two seminars, sponsored by IMC with UNDP, were held and successfully provided space for questions and clarifications about SLBC. The first seminar was with the Parliamentarians and Ministers, and the second for civil society, local government, media, academics, and the public.

Partnership

The project works closely with media development NGOs and organizations which have all offered assistance, if needed, in the development of SLBC: BBC/World Service Trust, Deutsche Welle Akademie, Hirondelle Foundation, Journalists for Human Rights, and the Knight Foundation Fellowship programme (administered by the International Center for Journalists).

Challenges and Management Response

Initially, the passage of the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation Act was planned by the end of 2008, while the UN Radio planned to close in September 2009, providing for a transition period of 9 months. However, the passage of the Bill was delayed in order to develop a new law that would reflect international standards of public service broadcasting and promote principles of independent and responsible journalism in support of the promotion of democracy and socio-economic development. After constant lobbying by civil society and journalists, as well as discussions between the government and the UN, the Bill was finally passed and signed at the beginning of 2010, meaning that the transition had to be managed over a 3 month period as opposed to the 9 months that was originally envisaged. This put tremendous pressure on the UN to deliver quickly to manage the transition.

Additionally, the continuation of the delay experienced in the establishment of the Board of Trustees, triggered by the delay in the passage of the law and the approval process by Parliament, meant that most of the institutional development activities did not take place by the end of the first half of 2010. This included the recruitment of the SLBC senior management and staff and the development of key policy documents, as the Act establishing the SLBC states that the Board of Trustees is the body that implements the recruitment of senior management and staff. The Board of Trustees finally became operational in mid-June 2010 following the appointment of 6 out of 8 Board Members. Once the temporary staffing arrangement between April and June ended, the Board of Trustees developed a framework of employing a scaled down number of 160 of the temporary staff for an additional period to support the continued broadcasting of SLBC while the recruitment of the formal staff kicked off in 2010. The recruitment is now fully underway in 2011.

As mentioned above, the formal DG and DDG assumed assignment from 1 October 2010, also assuming responsibility for the overall management of SLBC as well as the recruitment

of the rest of the staff. Since then, various meetings have taken place to agree on the organogram and a clear timeline for recruitment. No additional staff was recruited by the end of 2010, and therefore the recruitment of SLBC core staff will be one of the most crucial activities for 2011 to ensure the efficient and effective functioning of SLBC.

Cross Cutting Issues

Today, radio is by far the most important medium for news and public information in Sierra Leone. A survey carried out in March 2010 for the Swiss media development agency, Fondation Hirondelle, found that radio is listened to by 82% of Sierra Leoneans, up 5% on their 2008 findings. This compares to 26% for television, 9% for newspapers and just 3% for the internet. 86% of men and 78% of women are listeners. Significantly, well over half the radio audience did not go to school and 25% of those surveyed said they did not have enough money even to feed themselves. As previous studies have indicated, the poor and illiterate are often denied the information they need to participate fully in the democratic process and are more likely to be swayed by the arguments of party stalwarts. Crucially, for the purposes of this application, UN Radio attracted 32% of the audience alongside SLBC's 27%. The combined figure for SLBC after the merger constitutes nearly 60% of the available audience, a reach unattainable by any other medium. In terms of investment on return, this represents a cost of approximately 15 cents per listener based on a 500,000 USD investment.

In 2011, the objective will be to build on the outputs achieved by concentrating on creating themed 'programme zones' aimed at specific target groups, namely women, children and young people. This will be funded by the UN PBF. These zones will be supported by funded initiatives in the key areas of governance and human rights, health, sports, culture, religion, and education. In addition, SLBC's relationship with its audiences in the regions will be strengthened by building networks and listening clubs around UN and SLBC presence in those towns where regional outposts of the two organizations exist side by side. Regular audience research will be carried out in order to better address the tastes, interests and needs of audiences in the regions.

V. Future Work Plan (if applicable)

VI. Performance Indicators (optional)⁴

VII. Abbreviations and Acronyms

- List the main abbreviations and acronyms that are used in the report.

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

DDG – Deputy Director General

DG – Director General

DIM – Direct Implementation Modality

DaO – Delivering as One

IMC – Independent Media Commission

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

⁴ E.g. for the UNDG Iraq Trust Fund and the MDG-F.

PBF – Peacebuilding Fund

SLBC – Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation

SLBS – Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service

TMT – Transition Management Team

UNIPSIL – United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone

UN – United Nations